

Betty Alpaugh

Program Director

Florida House Learning Center

941.316.1200 Voice

941.316.1203 Fax

balpaugh@scgov.net

<http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu>

(Due to the number of speakers during the panel discussions, I was not able to offer this suggestion, which I hope will become part of the record.)

In response to a severe, four-year drought, the Florida House was built in 1994 to teach citizens about water efficiency through demonstration education. This model home and landscape project was expanded to include a wide array of sustainability principles, practices and products, including energy conservation, recycled and least-toxic building materials, and storm protection/disaster mitigation. Operated by the Sarasota County Extension Service, the Learning Center has enjoyed enormous success in effecting behavior change, as demonstrated by an annual visitor survey.

Once the R & D phase of EPA's water efficiency program is completed and a system of labeling has been developed, the challenge will be to promote the program effectively. As a pervasive presence throughout the nation, and a well established and respected educational delivery system, the Extension Service could be a valuable partner in the dissemination of the "Water Star" message at the local, grass-roots level, and could compound the synergy of the national marketing campaign. Unbiased, research-based consumer education will be the key to success.

As you probably know, the Extension Service is a partnership of three levels of government, providing scientific knowledge and educational resources and support to the public to foster sustainable communities:

FEDERAL (United States Department of Agriculture)

STATE (Each state's land grant university)

COUNTY (Local/County governments)

Lastly, you should be aware that, in the absence of a national water efficiency program, our state's land grant institution, the University of Florida, developed what they are calling a "Water Star" Program, which was introduced to Extension staff last Spring. Of course, it does not involve product labeling, and I will be happy to provide you with copies of the program documents as well as contact information.